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and soil, the purity of the water, and healthiness of the climate render the valley of the Lower Burdekin and its tributaries a most valuable addition to the pastoral and agricultural resources of the colony.

I have the honour, &c.,

(Signed) G. ELPHINSTONE DALRYMPLE.

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II.—*Reports of the various Expeditions fitted out to relieve, or ascertain the fate of Messrs. BURKE and WILLS, comprising—*

1. Report and Journal of Commander W. H. NORMAN, R.N., with Map showing portion of Flinders River.
  2. Diary of J. M'KINLAY, Esq. (with Map).
    - (a). From Adelaide to Leichhardt River (Camp 58).
    - (b). From Camp 58 to Port Denison.
  3. Journal of Landsborough's Expedition from Carpentaria (with Map).
    - (a). Report to Captain NORMAN on the Albert River.
    - (b). From Albert River, south-westward, to Rich Plains, Herbert River, about 20° 15' s., 158° 4' e. (both approximative).
    - (c). From Albert River across the Australian Continent, *via* the Darling River to Melbourne.
  4. WALKER'S Expedition from the Nogoia to the Gulf of Carpentaria (with Map).
  5. Despatch from Sir H. BARKLY, of 21st August, 1862.
  6. Despatches from Sir G. BOWEN, of 15th March and 12th April, 1862.
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1. *Report of Commander NORMAN, R.N., followed by Extracts from Journal.*

*To the Hon. the Chief Secretary, &c.*

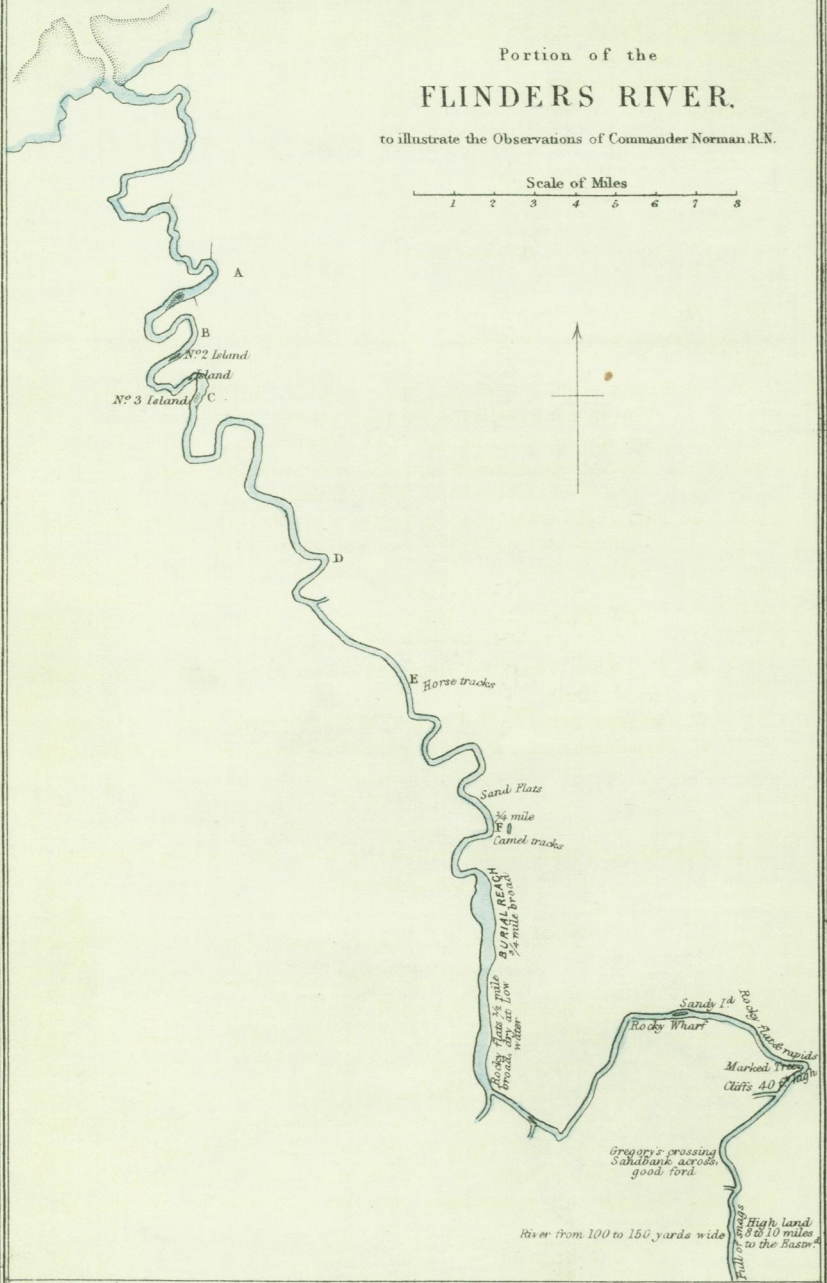
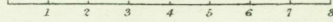
H.M.C.S. *Victoria*, Hobson's Bay, April 1, 1862.

SIR,—I have the honour to forward the accompanying copy of my journal on the late expedition to the Gulf of Carpentaria, for the purpose of rendering relief, if possible, to the missing explorers under the command of Mr. Burke, and of directing the movements of the two land-parties organized and dispatched from Brisbane and Rockhampton; and beg to submit the following condensed remarks and observations of the voyage and expedition which I had the honour to command, for the information of the Government.

Portion of the  
**FLINDERS RIVER.**

to illustrate the Observations of Commander Norman R.N.

Scale of Miles



The voyage from Brisbane to the Barrier Reef (8 days) augured well for a quick passage to the head of the Gulf; but a strong gale commencing on the 1st September separated the *Victoria* from the *Firefly*, and proved the cause of a sad disaster to the latter, which was most unusual for that season of the year. Fortunately the wreck was capable of being towed without disembarking the horses, which were accordingly landed on the Albert River (Gulf of Carpentaria), about 30 miles from its mouth; after which I proceeded to examine the river, which I found at this season navigable for 55 miles.

On 8th November I visited the Plains of Promise, which, to all appearance, well deserve the name, although, in consequence of many months' drought, not much grass was to be seen on them at that time. Same afternoon we returned to the junction of the Barkly and the Albert, and marked a tree on the west bank, near a fine water-hole, about 300 yards distant from the river.

On 16th November I started Mr. Landsborough and party on the south-western expedition.

On 7th December Mr. Walker arrived with the welcome news of having found traces of Burke on the Flinders. On the 20th, I dispatched Walker and party to take up the tracks they had found of Burke, and follow them up, arranging at the same time to meet him on the eastern bank of the Flinders about the 28th or 29th, in order to examine the tracks myself and obtain any documents which might be found. On arriving at this spot at daylight on the 29th, I found, to my great dismay, that the place we had appointed to meet each other at was inundated during the spring-tides, so that it would be impossible for horses to come down. Leaving a bottle containing a memorandum for Walker, I proceeded up the river to within 3 miles of Burial Reach; but having some doubts in my mind as to my being in the Flinders, from the fact of there being no marks to indicate the entrance and other signs, I returned to the ship. However, on examining Stokes's chart, which I had left on board, I satisfied myself that I had been in the Flinders, and therefore, on the following morning, dispatched the second lieutenant in charge of a few stores I had for Walker, with orders to examine carefully the eastern bends of the river, at places marked on the chart.

On the 10th I left the ship with the barge and galley for the purpose of prosecuting further search for the camps and relieving the cutter, taking with me 8 days' provisions, and same day met the cutter at Station A, on her way down to the ship, having found no traces of any party.

Next morning explored the plains for 3 hours. We found them dry mud, apparently overflowed at every spring tide, with the ex-

ception of some small rises. During this morning we came across the tracks of a horse, together with the footprints of a man walking alongside, going north ; also, other tracks leading south.

We returned to the boats, and proceeded up the river to the place marked G. Camped at 5 P.M., on the east bank, and, guided by Wilson, who had previously seen them, went to examine the tracks of the camels which the officer of the cutter had discovered, and found them at a dry water-hole about 250 yards from the banks of the river. At this camp the country assumed a more pleasing aspect, its features bearing altogether a different character. Instead of mud and mangroves, we found acacia, box, gum, wild plum, and other trees, while the soil was clothed with luxuriant grasses. I started on the 13th January in the galley to explore the river farther up. After about 4 miles we came to what proved to be the Burial Reach of Stokes ; at the head of this reach the banks of the river were of a rocky formation, and the bed of the same nature, with only 6 inches water at low tide and very level, so that we had to carry our boat nearly half a mile : here the river divides itself into two arms, the one bearing south, and the other south-east. I proceeded up the latter for about 18 miles, passing over four rocky bars, at each of which we had to get out and haul our boat over.

Finding no indications of any one having visited this neighbourhood, we marked a tree, and returned to the first rocky bar ; anchored there until the flood-tide made, which was 10 P.M., and reached the camp at Burial Reach at 7.30 A.M. on the 14th of January. Reached the ship on the 16th of January, and started for Investigator Roads, where we remained till, at 11.30 P.M. on the 6th February, Landsborough reported his arrival at the depôt on the 19th January, having penetrated in a south-west direction a distance of about 200 miles, when he was forced to return for want of water (*v. postea*).

After coaling at Investigator Roads, and calling at Bountiful, Booby, and Albany islands, I anchored on 17th February at No. VIII. Island. Here we discovered a rock awash not noted in either chart or guide. Surveyed it the next day, and examined the doubtful Chilcott Rocks, which I found to exist, and in nearly the same position as that assigned them on the chart.

Arrived at Port Denison on the 27th of February.

I . . . report further, for your information, that the navigation of the Gulf of Carpentaria was found free from danger, from Booby Island to Bountiful Island. From the latter place to about 8 miles off the Albert River the water shoals gradually from 5 fathoms at 7 miles from the shore, to 3 fathoms at 4 miles, and  $2\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms at 3 miles ; the bottom being mud. Many discolorations were seen and passed through, with no perceptible change in the depth

of water. They were at first alarming, having all the appearance of sand-banks with but few feet of water on them. In the channel of the bar across the Flinders was found 5 feet at low water, and at the Albert River 4 feet; the rise and fall being nearly the same at each, viz. from 6 to 12 feet. Inside the bars both rivers are free from dangers for the first 9 miles; beyond which they are equal, if not superior, to the Brisbane and Fitzroy rivers. There is only one tide in the 24 hours, and high water occurred between 9 P.M. and 4 A.M.

The winds in October and November were mostly from the south-east in the morning, east at noon, and north towards sunset; calms during the night. December 6th and 7th, a heavy gale set in from the north-east, with torrents of rain, which flooded the plains for some days. This gale veered to north, clearing up at north-west, leaving this monsoon all the month. From January to the middle of February the winds prevailed mostly from north-east and north to north-west, but with no great strength; frequent calms.

The country on the banks of both rivers, for the first 15 to 20 miles from the sea, is constant monotonous mangrove and mud, more or less flooded with the spring-tides, and swarming with insects. Higher up, as the land rises, vegetation improves rapidly, and the scenery, although mostly very flat, is good and promising for tropical vegetation. The first rains produced good grass, which grew at the rate of an inch per diem, by actual measurement 10 days after the rain fell.

Alligators and crocodiles were seen; but they are neither large nor numerous, and were both shy and timid. Some few snakes on the banks of the river were seen; they were supposed to be of the water-species.

The mosquitoes, sand-flies, and the common fly were most numerous and troublesome. Every scheme was resorted to to obtain rest at night, but to no purpose if there were not a strong wind.

Investigator Roads, as is mentioned by Flinders and Stokes, I found a good anchorage, secure from all winds, easy of access, and having good holding-ground.

The natives of Bentinck Island numbered about 60, are treacherous beyond conception, and those seen up the rivers ought not to be relied upon with any confidence.

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*Memoranda from Journal of Voyage of H.M.C.S. 'Victoria'  
from Hobson's Bay to Carpentaria.*

Departure 4th August, 3 P.M.

August 28.—Lat.  $18^{\circ} 7' \text{ S.}$ , long.  $153^{\circ} \text{ E.}$  Steady trade-winds with fine weather. Lihou Reefs 65 miles distant.

*Aug.* 29.—Weather changing;  $15^{\circ} 46'$  s.,  $151^{\circ} 35'$  E.; therm.  $80^{\circ}$  Fahr.

*Aug.* 30.—Weather unsettled. A southerly set of current of 22 miles. ( $14^{\circ} 55'$  s.,  $149^{\circ} 42'$  E.)

*September* 2.—Strong gales, s.e. veering s.s.e.  $12^{\circ} 12'$  s.,  $144^{\circ} 50'$  E.

*Sept.* 5.—Gale broke, and at 6.15 p.m. anchored on Great Detached Reef, 18 fathoms, sandy bottom; 85 fathoms cable out. (N.B. The course steered from noon this day showed a current of two hours to northward. Noon  $11^{\circ} 31'$  s.,  $145^{\circ}$  E.)

*Sept.* 7.—Found convoy (the *Firefly* with the horses for Landsborough's expedition on board) wrecked on a coral-reef. Horses all saved but three.

*Sept.* 11.—Barge of *Victoria* went adrift.

*Sept.* 22.—Engaged till this day lightening and getting off the *Firefly*, and reached Cairncross Island, east side of Cape York, against strong ebb-tide (peculiar to this season), which had landed barge unharmed after drifting masterless 60 miles (of course favoured by a still more rapid flood-tide).

*Sept.* 24.—Noon, lat.  $10^{\circ} 55'$ .

*Sept.* 26.—Noon, lat.  $14^{\circ} 34'$  s., long.  $139^{\circ} 46'$ ; therm.  $77\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$  Fahr.

*Sept.* 27.—Winds light, easterly, and northing after 8 a.m. Anchored off Bountiful Island, and ascended Mount Flinders; quite low. Soil of island sand or disintegrated sandstone, covered with rank, dry, wiry grass. By 29th had caught 126 turtle for jerking, &c., to save provisions.

*Sunday, September* 29.—At 4 p.m. anchored in Investigator Roads in 5 fathoms. The winds for the last three days had been north-east during the day, and southerly at night. At  $1\frac{1}{2}$  to 2 miles off various discoloured patches were rounded or passed, but no perceptible difference in the depths of soundings was found—the water being of a very light colour generally makes the navigation rather exciting. The changes in the colour of the water this day have all the appearance of sand-shoals, or dangers of some kind, but nothing dangerous to navigation was met with on our way up the gulf. The depths found are generally very uniform, deepening from the eastern shore to 38 fathoms towards the middle of the gulf, with generally mud or sandy bottom; some few casts of rocky or hard bottom were found near latitude  $12^{\circ} 25'$  s., longitude  $141^{\circ}$  E., with some 18 to 24 fathoms, and for 35 miles in a s.s.w. course.

*Sept.* 29 to *October* 17.—Engaged arranging for Mr. Landsborough's departure, who left 16th November. Note that whole coast appears to be intersected with creeks and rivers for some miles. Entered (17th) what was supposed to be a channel, but

proved to be the outlet of a river (supposed to be the Leichhardt).

*Oct. 17 to November 18.*—Nothing calling for remark except intense heat.

*Nov. 20.*—Heat at 2 P.M.  $104^{\circ}$  in shade.

*Nov. 29.*—Heat at 10:30 P.M.  $107^{\circ}$ !!

*December 5.*—Landed at "Junction" (Albert River), the spot fixed upon for a depôt on leaving Melbourne, and found the place had been some feet under water last tide, and that for miles the plains were then covered with salt-water, showing the place to be quite uninhabitable, with no fresh-water to be had for miles around. . . . . After we had passed two reaches going down, we were suddenly surprised by an ambuscade of natives on both sides. They were painted, and armed with long spears, womeras, and clubs; but they were not fired at. Therm.  $98^{\circ}$  to  $109^{\circ}$ .

*Dec. 7.*—Mr. Walker arrived in the midst of a furious gale. At 10 P.M. cleared up; light E.S.E. wind. Therm. at 2 A.M.  $70^{\circ}$  Fahr.

*Dec. 20.*—Mr. Walker started on return journey.

*Dec. 29.*—At daylight visited the place of meeting marked [A], and found the nature of the country such that the tides overflowed it at the springs, with nothing but mud and mangrove in sight. About 22 miles further up, the river became more tortuous, and several sand-banks were passed, contracting the tide, which was running up strong. I continued on with the hope of reaching Burial Reach; but, after going on to 1 P.M., we stopped to dinner, when I landed, and found the country better, with grass and water in plenty. Left again at 2:30 P.M., and proceeding 10 miles further, came to some cliffs on the eastern side (dark brown clay) 12 feet high. I had now come by estimation 35 miles up, and had not got to Burial Reach, or anything like it, by Stokes's description; no "grassy islands," or "sloping banks down to the water's edge clothed with grass," but only mangrove and mud, and one or two sunken islands with the tops of mangrove a foot above water as we passed them, to indicate their position. The country around here is the best I have seen in the Gulf, and the grasses, of which there are varieties, very good, with the timber larger and looking more healthy than any part of the Albert. But, finding no traces of any one, and the upper part of the river here not agreeing with its description, I began to fear I must be in a wrong river, so I determined to start on the turn of tide, return to the ship, and make a further exploration of the coast to the eastward of this entrance. At 10:15 P.M. started with the first of the tide downward, and in a dead calm, with much thunder and lightning all round the compass.

*Monday, Dec. 30.*—At 7:30 A.M., the storm having passed sea-



ward, stood out of the river to the bar, and waited until turn of tide and north-west or sea-breeze to fetch the ship, which we did at 3:30 P.M. On examining Stokes's book and chart with the first lieutenant, I found there could be no doubt of my having been up the Flinders, and that *the difference in time of tide in seeing these places makes so much difference in their appearance*. Stokes appears to have gone up and down at night. I passed from the first position [A] right up, by daylight.

*January 11, 1862.*—Started at daylight in three parties to examine plains. These are mud, mostly overflowed at spring-tides, but some of the rises above high water-mark, and on one of these came upon the track of one horse and one man, with shoes or boots; tracks led north, and were afterwards discovered leading south. In the afternoon went to examine camel-tracks at Station G of chart, where the country being higher assumes quite a different appearance, there being cliffs of brown clay 20 feet high, whose summits are clothed with acacia, box, gum and native wild plum. Tracks of camels could not be identified.

*Jan. 21.*—Squally with rain, but much less wind from west-north-west. Ordered the annual survey of all stores to be held, and in the afternoon proceeded in the gig to Bentinck Island to try and get up a friendly feeling with the natives there. On closing in with the beach they came down, about 30 of them, men and boys, fully armed. Seeing they were hostilely inclined, I did not land, but proceeded further south away from them, and there landed, which was no sooner done than they were after us. On their coming up, tried to show them by every means that we were not come to do them harm, but to give them some presents, which I at once did by giving them two tomahawks; they then laid their arms down, but would not leave them for a moment, or come near us. Seeing they were so very suspicious, I thought it better to leave them for the present, and did so, going over to Fowler's Island to look at it. I found it of a rocky formation of the same nature as up the Flinders River, with some good dark soil on the top, on which good grass was growing, but no timber but stunted mangrove, and no water fit for anything.

*February 6.*—Landsborough returned from his exploration to south-west; had reached depôt 19th January (*v. postea*), and was anxious to start south-east. No casualties.

*Feb. 12.*—On landing, there being only two natives seen, with much persuasion I induced them to come near to receive the gifts, after they had been made to understand by signs and gestures that all was for them and their families. I ordered the boat's crew to go down to the boat, which was about 300 yards off from us, which they all did. I followed them myself about 10 minutes after, with my back to the two men, who had kept their spears in hand all the

time. I had not got more than 25 or 30 yards from them, when a noise behind made me turn suddenly round, dropping at the same time my umbrella on my shoulder; as I did so I discovered both these treacherous savages in the act of poisoning a spear each, and stepping stealthily after me, not more than 10 yards off. My sudden discovery of their intended object by facing them, put them into confusion, and they stole away as if ashamed of being found out. Their wives and children have always been kept at a long distance, but nothing seemed treacherous in their behaviour further than that circumstance, and their not being inclined at any time to lay down their arms. I am now satisfied they are treacherous and bloodthirsty. After leaving them, they ran down and took charge of their boat and the presents, and seemed much delighted, judging by the noise they made. At 4:30 weighed and took our departure from the island, with the wind light from the north-west, and sultry weather. Latitude, at noon,  $15^{\circ} 55'$  S.; longitude,  $140^{\circ} 4' 45''$  E. Thermometer,  $95^{\circ}$  in cabin; on deck, in the sun,  $130^{\circ}$ ; stoke-hole,  $145^{\circ}$ .

*Feb. 17.*—At 6 P.M. brought up under No. VIII. Island in  $6\frac{1}{2}$  fathoms water, with 50 fathoms of cable. On approaching the place to anchor, observed a danger not noted on the Chart or Strait Pilot.

*Feb. 18.*—Fresh south-east gale with continued rain until 1 P.M. On examining the above shoal at daylight, and finding it to be a coral-reef, with only 18 inches water on it, of about 20 yards diameter, steep all round, and right in the fairway of any vessel anchoring at or passing this island, to avoid the doubtful rock to the eastward of it, directed Lieutenant Woods to survey and fix its position; and the weather moderating in the afternoon, took two boats, the galley and the cutter, to look for the doubtful rocks\* to the eastward. At 5 P.M. (low water) found them both, passing with galley over the northernmost, with only 18 inches of water on it, and pulled up to the south one, which is about 150 yards from it, north and south, and with 7 fathoms of water between them, and steep to all round. This I found was awash, and had a lump of broken dead coral on it, on to which the bowman held the boat while bearings were taken, which were found to agree in every way with the position marked on the Admiralty Chart for the bank, with 1 fathom on it, and from which Chilcott Rocks bear about north true 150 yards.

*Feb. 27.*—Anchored in Port Denison.

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\* Chilcott Rocks.